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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 27 of Security Council resolution 2251 (2015), in which the Council requested me to continue to inform it of progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and to bring to its immediate attention any serious violation of the Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, of 20 June 2011 (S/2011/384, annex). The report provides an update on the situation in Abyei and on the deployment and operations of UNISFA from the issuance of my previous report (S/2015/870) on 13 November 2015, to 31 March 2016. It also presents the progress made in the implementation of the additional tasks mandated under Council resolution 2024 (2011) relating to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and provides a recommendation on the extension of the UNISFA mandate.

II. Security situation

2. The security situation in the Abyei Area remained unpredictable but generally calm during the reporting period. The Government of the Sudan continued to maintain between 120 and 150 oil personnel inside the Diffra oil complex, in violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and various Security Council resolutions. An armed South Sudanese soldier was also found within the Abyei Area in violation of the Agreement and relevant Council resolutions. Following a six-week pause due to flooding, on 11 November UNISFA observed the resumption of excavation work by the Government of the Sudan, which was designed to improve the Diffra oil installation defences, in the presence of some 30 armed police officers. In December 2015, contractors from the Sudan finished digging a trench along a circumference of approximately 75 km around the installation, leaving the oil facilities entirely encircled by the trench, but maintaining vehicular access via road. On 25 February, UNISFA troops on a routine patrol in the area of Soheib in the central sector observed the drilling of a water well by a Chinese company in the presence of between 10 and 15 armed security guards, in another violation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011.

3. The dry season began in October following a wet season characterized by a lack of rainfall compared with previous years, especially in northern parts of Abyei.

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While the rains were sufficient to render roads impassable, rivers and water reservoirs were not filled to their usual levels, raising the prospect that the water table would not be adequately replenished to last throughout the dry season. A lack of water and pasture in northern Abyei led to increased pressure on the Misseriya to migrate into Ngok Dinka-inhabited areas in the south, in particular those on the Bahr al-Arab/Kiir River. Concurrently, a scaling back of food rations in the Agok area south of the Kiir River encouraged Ngok Dinka resettlement to villages north of the river. This movement of both communities increased the risk of clashes during the dry season.

4. The conflict prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by UNISFA in previous dry seasons revolved around the creation of a military line of disengagement between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. To mitigate the increased risk of conflict during this dry season, UNISFA reinforced the line of disengagement in central areas with a high density of Ngok Dinka and relaxed it in western and eastern areas with a lesser Ngok Dinka population to enable Misseriya access to the grazing land and water available only in the south. This relaxation was made possible through engagement with both communities to identify suitable migration corridors to be used by each community for water and the grazing of cattle and through regular patrols to coordinate the sharing of resources and monitor the movement of cattle herders. The communities themselves were involved in the monitoring of migration activities and in the maintenance of law and order in these areas. During the reporting period, UNISFA conducted 5,582 patrols, both during the day and at night, undertook 1,256 escorts and facilitated 36 joint security committee meetings with community leaders in the Abyei Area.

5. On 10 December, UNISFA troops on patrol in the general area of Shegeg in the northern sector arrested and disarmed a soldier from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition in possession of an AK-47 rifle, a RGD-5 grenade and 11 AK-7 rifle cartridges. He was released on 20 January at Kabdud on the northern boundary of the Abyei Area. On 21 December, UNISFA disarmed a Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldier in Agany Toak, in the southern sector, in possession of an AK-47 rifle, a rifle magazine and 156 AK-47 rifle cartridges. He was subsequently handed over to SPLA national monitors representing the Government of South Sudan.

6. One incident in particular highlighted the volatility of the Abyei situation during the reporting period. On 26 November, unknown assailants fired rocket-propelled grenade rounds in the general area of Makir, in Abyei town, targeting the residence of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief. Five shells landed in the vicinity of the Paramount Chief's residence, another inside his compound and another in a nearby primary school. During the attack, a 4-year-old girl was killed, and five other residents were wounded. UNISFA troops present in the area returned fire. During the ensuing exchange, a peacekeeper was critically injured and transferred to the UNISFA level II clinic, where he succumbed to his injuries. The protection of the Paramount Chief's residence has since been enhanced by reinforcing the defences around the premises and establishing a temporary operating base across the Nyamura River, in the direction from which the attack was launched.

7. Crime also remained a worrying source of insecurity in the Abyei Area. On 11 November, UNISFA was informed of an attack on Misseriya traders in the general area of Shegeg in the northern sector. A patrol launched to verify the

incident located 13 men who had been shot dead and 2 men who had been wounded by gunshots. The wounded were given first aid and taken to the Diffra local hospital for further treatment. They stated that their group had been travelling back from Mayom market, in Unity State, South Sudan, when they had been ambushed and robbed of their money by unknown assailants. One of the two men wounded subsequently died of his injuries. A thorough search of the area was unsuccessful in locating the perpetrators.

8. On 3 December, UNISFA was informed of an attack by unknown assailants on a cattle camp in the villages of Abyen Jong Yomand Mikol Alei, in the western and eastern parts of Abyei town, respectively. In the first incident, during which about 500 cattle were stolen, a Dinka man was killed and two others were injured. UNISFA troops conducting night patrols in the area pursued the perpetrators, who abandoned the cattle and escaped through the bush. The injured men were evacuated for treatment. In the second incident, a Dinka man was killed and another later succumbed to multiple gunshot wounds while being taken to hospital for treatment. UNISFA retrieved 15 AK-47 rifles from the area, which were taken into temporary custody at Dokura pending their destruction.

9. On 1 January, UNISFA received information from the local community that unknown numbers of cattle belonging to the Ngok Dinka had been rustled and a person killed by unknown armed persons east of the Mulmul area of Abyei. A UNISFA patrol launched to verify the information and search for the suspect located a Dinka fatality. Members of the local community reported, however, that cattle had not been rustled during the incident. On 3 January, UNISFA was again informed by the local community that 200 Misseriya cattle had been rustled and a Misseriya person killed by unknown armed persons at Koladet. UNISFA deployed a patrol, which located a Misseriya fatality at the Todach and Noong junction, brought to the area by members of the local community from the bush. The following day, UNISFA troops conducted a further patrol to Koladet and found blood stains and six AKM bullets in the general area. However, the local community denied that cattle had been rustled during the incident.

10. During the reporting period, a number of incidents occurred in which cattle believed to have been stolen from Misseriya herders were recovered by members of the Ngok Dinka community and returned to their rightful owners. On 24 February, four cows stolen from Misseriya herders were recovered by Ngok Dinka community protection committee members at Agok in the southern sector following a tip-off. The committee members handed the cattle over to UNISFA in the presence of local community members and the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief. The cattle were then returned to their rightful owners on 27 February. On 20 March, 12 cows believed to have been stolen from Misseriya herders by unknown rustlers and recovered by members of the Dinka community were handed over to their rightful Misseriya owners by Dinka tribal leaders, in the presence of UNISFA troops. UNISFA observed an emerging trend of cattle recovery by both communities during the dry season, complemented by a return to intercommunal trade.

11. On 17 and 19 March, UNISFA observed trading activities between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities at Noong in the central sector. More than 2,000 people from both communities were observed trading in commodities, including sugar, wheat, flour, onions, salt, vegetables, livestock and textiles. On 28 March, an

exchange of goods and commodities between the communities was also observed in the villages of Dokura, in the central sector, and Tajalei, in the southern sector.

12. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to survey, clear and dispose of explosive hazards throughout the Abyei Area, enabling freedom of movement for local communities, United Nations personnel and humanitarian actors. The Service ensured that all UNISFA company operating bases were safe from explosive hazards, releasing over 572,000 square metres of land through battle area clearance and verifying 77 km of UNISFA priority routes as safe from explosive hazards. During the reporting period, non-technical survey and mine risk education activities undertaken with the communities led to the identification and destruction of 37 explosive remnants of war. The items recovered included rocket-propelled grenade warheads, rockets and boosters, mortar rounds, hand grenades, assorted ammunition and point detonating fuses. The Service provided mine risk education to more than 10,400 people, including nomadic herders and returnees.

13. On 11 November, the United Nations Mine Action Service conducted its first weapons and ammunition destruction exercise at the weapons and ammunition management facility located in Dukra in the central sector. A total of 96 light weapons and over 5,500 rounds of small arms ammunition confiscated by UNISFA troops throughout the Abyei Area were destroyed, according to the standard operating procedures developed for the mission and pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2205 (2015).

14. On 28 January, during routine maintenance at the weapons and ammunition management facility in Dukra, the United Nations Mine Action Service observed that the compound had been broken into and a number of items stolen, including parts of the high-priced weapons-cutting shears. On 22 February, UNMAS discovered a further break-in at the same facility during a scheduled upgrade of security measures there. Two wheels from weapons-cutting shears had been stolen, a weapons container secured with three different locks containing remnants of destroyed weapons had been opened, and a power cable for the lights at the facility had been disconnected. An investigation into both incidents is under way, and weapons and ammunition management activities have been suspended pending the replacement of the stolen equipment. No weapons and ammunition were stored at the location during the time of the break-ins.

15. The UNISFA police component continued efforts to support the maintenance of law and order in the Abyei Area by conducting community-based interactive patrols and enhancing the capacity of community protection committees, in accordance with paragraph 16 of Security Council resolution 2230 (2015). UNISFA police officers were co-located with community protection committees in the central and southern sectors of Abyei to advise committee members on managing law and order situations in the Area. The establishment of committees in northern Abyei continued to be delayed owing to a lack of support from the Government of the Sudan. During the reporting period, the UNISFA police component conducted 314 independent and joint security observation and community interactive patrols with UNISFA troops throughout Abyei, covering a total distance of 8,797 km. The Government of the Sudan continued to delay the issuance of visas for newly recruited police and corrections personnel. This had a serious impact on the component's operational capacity.

16. UNISFA police officers embarked on crime prevention campaigns in the Mulmul and Tajalei areas of central Abyei and provided 196 transport operators, traders and community members with advice on theft prevention and methods for resolving domestic disputes. The UNISFA police gender cell, in collaboration with the UNISFA training and development cell, conducted six induction training sessions for 114 military staff officers and military observers. In commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the UNISFA police component, in collaboration with other UNISFA sections and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, organized two global open days on women and peace and security, on 16 and 18 February, in Abyei town and Diffra respectively.

III. Political developments

17. A meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee has not been held since March 2015, and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism has not held a meeting since its extraordinary meeting held in October 2015. During the reporting period, UNISFA and the African Union Commission continued to engage with the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and other senior Sudanese and South Sudanese government officials to encourage a resumption of those meetings. The traditional leaders' dialogue meeting proposed by the African Union has also not been rescheduled.

18. UNISFA continued to promote grass-roots dialogue between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. In December, UNISFA and its partners planned a conference to be held in Abyei between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. However, discussions concerning the role and responsibility of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee at the meeting led to it being postponed indefinitely while consultations with the Committee continue. On 15 February, some 600 members of the local Ngok Dinka community staged a peaceful demonstration outside the main gate of the UNISFA headquarters in Abyei town over the failure of the meeting to take place. They demanded that meetings between the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities should be allowed to proceed in order for issues of mutual concern to be addressed.

19. Following the conference on soft border management and peaceful co-existence, held in Aweil, South Sudan, from 17 to 19 September, a follow-up conference planned for 11 to 13 November was cancelled after local Sudanese authorities warned the Misseriya participants that their security could not be guaranteed while travelling from El Muglad in the Sudan to Aweil in South Sudan. A new date for the meeting has not been set.

20. On 25 February, with security provided by UNISFA, some 300 members of the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities met in Noong, central Abyei. Led by their respective chiefs, the communities discussed issues of mutual concern, including migration, cattle rustling, the establishment of a common market and the sharing of resources, water and pasture. During the meeting, the communities made progress on the sharing of pasture and migration routes through Abyei, but were unable to reach a consensus on a location for a common market. Reiterating previously stated positions on the market, the Misseriya community called for it to be established in Abyei town, while the Ngok Dinka community suggested Goli or Diffra in northern

Abyei. The communities agreed to establish a joint subcommittee to continue discussions on the location.

21. On 6 March, UNISFA facilitated a further meeting of the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities at its base in Todach. UNISFA provided transportation and area security and facilitated the conduct of discussions. The agenda included the modalities for conflict management during the dry season and grazing routes through Abyei for Misseriya nomads. It was agreed that a joint committee would be formed to deal with cattle rustling and other criminal activities. The terms and modalities for making the committee operational were not, however, finalized. The location of the common market was also discussed, with both communities maintaining their initial positions. The issue was postponed for further discussion at a later date.

22. On 17 March, a third joint community meeting between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities was held at Noong, in the central sector. It brought together 48 leaders from both communities, with UNISFA troops providing robust area security. They discussed the sharing of water and grazing lands, the mitigation of violence in both communities and, once again, the establishment of a common market. While acknowledging their differences on the issue of a site for the establishment of a common market, the communities agreed on the need for further deliberations to find a way forward. The leaders met again on 24 March, and signed an agreement to establish a traditional court system to mediate civil disputes and deal with criminal activity, with support from UNISFA; form a joint committee to locate and agree on appropriate grazing corridors for Misseriya nomads; and continue with trading activities between the two communities at Noong, Dokura and Tajalei while deliberations on a permanent location for a common market continued. UNISFA will continue to engage closely with the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities to build on the outcomes of the meetings and facilitate opportunities for further dialogue and interaction.

IV. Humanitarian situation

23. The difficult economic situation, population movements, intercommunal tension and limited or absent basic public services continued to result in significant humanitarian needs in the Abyei Area. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to 139,000 vulnerable people throughout Abyei. That comprises 61,000 people from the Ngok Dinka community; 20,000 Ngok Dinka returnees within the Area; 8,000 people displaced from neighbouring Unity and Warrap States in South Sudan; 15,000 resident Misseriya; and approximately 35,000 seasonal Misseriya migrants who entered the area in October due to drought. In addition, humanitarian organizations provided basic assistance to some 3,000 South Sudanese displaced from Unity State who used Diffra as a transit point to reach their final destinations in the Sudan. In 2016, it is anticipated that drought will exacerbate humanitarian needs.

24. Humanitarian organizations in Abyei worked to meet basic needs and increase the resilience of agropastoralist and nomadic communities through approaches tailored to their specific situations and vulnerabilities. Response priorities in 2016 include reducing the risk of malnutrition in children under 5 years of age and

pregnant and nursing mothers; providing adequate access to safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation; reducing dependency on food assistance; maintaining veterinary services; supporting basic education and training; addressing protection risks in collaboration with UNISFA; and ensuring coverage of basic health needs.

25. A total of 6,842 people displaced from Unity State in South Sudan continued to benefit from general food distribution. Focus shifted from free food distribution to more recovery-oriented interventions through food-for-assets projects. Other food-related activities included food to encourage girls' education, targeted supplementary feeding and in-patient feeding. Efforts to support community livelihoods also continued throughout the Area. Key activities included vocational training in vegetable production; post-harvest and integrated pest management; agricultural development; land preparation; nursery management; sowing, transplanting and mulching methods; business skills; and literacy classes.

26. Health-care and nutrition services were provided in the Area, including through mobile clinics, mass measles immunizations and nutritional screening for children from 6 to 59 months of age. However, there remains a need to tackle urgent health and nutrition challenges in the returnee villages. Support to the three non-functional clinics in northern Abyei, a shortage of government-provided health staff and a lack of dog-bite vaccines remain the key challenges in these areas.

27. The registration of pupils began at two secondary schools in Abyei town that had been closed since the conflict in 2011. The boys' and girls' schools were renovated in 2013 and 2014, but have not yet reopened due to security concerns. Currently, only one secondary school, in Agok, is operating in the Area. All the schools in returnee villages that were affected by the conflict in 2011 are in need of rehabilitation work. Returnee children are currently studying in open areas.

28. Access to safe water in the Area remained a priority. Seventeen new water boreholes were drilled, including two in returnee villages, and five hand pumps were rehabilitated. A hygiene campaign and community-led sanitation training were carried out, and five household latrines were completed in Agok. However, latrine usage remained a key challenge throughout the Area.

29. An assessment of shelter and non-food items in the returnee villages was conducted in January, and the registration process completed in March. As the population of the host community is very low, a blanket distribution for shelter items was undertaken in all returnee villages.

30. The humanitarian community continues to face many operational challenges. A lack of implementation capacity is felt across all sectors, mainly in northern parts of Abyei, due to restrictions on the operation of international non-governmental organizations in the Area. A new local non-governmental organization extended its presence in northern Abyei, doubling the total number of local partners. Meanwhile, three international non-governmental organizations established a base in Agok. Additional challenges for the humanitarian response included funding shortages for all partners; intercommunal tension; delays in the issuance of travel permits and restrictions on the movement of personnel and supplies into the Abyei Area by the Sudanese authorities; high implementation costs owing to security and logistical constraints; and the non-availability of Sudanese staff for safety and security reasons. Perceptions of bias in humanitarian delivery could further aggravate intercommunal tensions and increase security threats to aid workers and operations.

Efforts to ensure an appropriate degree of balance notwithstanding, aid operations are still to a large extent focused on Ngok Dinka communities in the southern parts of Abyei, due to the relative ease of access to such areas.

V. Status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

31. Some positive developments were initially reported in relations between the Sudan and South Sudan on border security during the reporting period. On 3 January, against the backdrop of a slump in oil prices on the world market, the Sudan agreed to review the oil transit and compensation fees owed to it by South Sudan, upon demonstration by the latter of its readiness to implement all other bilateral agreements between the two countries. South Sudan obliged and, on 25 January, the President issued a statement calling for a normalization of relations with the Sudan and ordering the withdrawal of South Sudanese troops 5 miles back from the border with the Sudan. He further pledged to activate all committees established under the Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, of September 2012. In response, on 26 January, the President of the Sudan ordered the reopening of the border with South Sudan. Since the announcement, at least three border crossing points have reopened. On 3 February, the President further announced the resumption of river transport between Kosti in the Sudan and Juba in South Sudan.

32. In an apparent change of tone, on 17 March, a senior aide of the President warned that the Sudan would reclose its borders if South Sudan continued what the Sudan perceives as support to its rebels. The renewal of accusations was made against the backdrop of reports in Khartoum that senior South Sudanese officials had met the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North leadership in Juba to discuss the needs of Sudanese rebels in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States. South Sudan has denied the accusations. Also on 17 March, the official news agency in the Sudan reported that the Council of Ministers, at a meeting chaired by the President, had decided that South Sudanese resident in the Sudan would be treated as foreigners, revoking a standing policy of equal access for Sudanese and South Sudanese citizens to health and education services in the Sudan, and that legal measures would be taken against any South Sudanese citizen not in possession of a valid passport and Sudanese visa.

33. On 19 March, the Sudanese embassy in Juba clarified the Sudanese threat to reclose its border with South Sudan, stating that more than 50 days had passed since the President of South Sudan had ordered the withdrawal of forces 5 miles from the common border and that the order had not yet been implemented. It also stated that none of the joint committees established under the Cooperation Agreement had been activated, in particular the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. It again accused South Sudan of harbouring and supporting Sudanese rebel movements. In response, South Sudan attributed the delay in withdrawing its forces from the border with the Sudan to logistical challenges. In a meeting with a delegation from the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on the Sudan and South Sudan visiting Juba on 21 and 22 March, the President reconfirmed his country's readiness to organize and attend a Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting.

34. On 25 and 27 March, SPLA accused the Sudanese air force of carrying out aerial bombardments of an SPLA military outpost in the Bebnis area of Renk, Upper Nile State, on 24 and 26 March respectively. SPLA reported that a number of livestock had been killed during the alleged incidents. The Sudanese army denied the accusation, stating that the air force had not carried out any attacks in South Sudan's territory. On 29 March, the Government of the Sudan was reported in the media as having decided to reclose the border with South Sudan.

35. During the reporting period, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism continued to face numerous challenges in the implementation of its aerial verification and monitoring mandate. A number of Mechanism patrols were not conducted owing to the rotation of UNISFA troops and the denial of permission to land by the Government of South Sudan, in violation of Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2024 (2011) and the status-of-forces agreements signed by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan in 2012. The restrictions on aerial monitoring of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone in the western sector also continued. Only 10 of 27 planned missions were conducted during the reporting period, all of them in the eastern sector of the Abyei Area. To date, the Mechanism has been able to conduct only 71 of the 175 planned aerial monitoring patrols.

36. On 8 February, a Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism aerial patrol observed a military presence, including a likely deployment of armoured vehicles and new civilian structures, in the general area of Tishwin in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone to the east of the Abyei Area. A verification mission conducted on 7 March confirmed the sighting. A ground patrol to the area is being planned for further verification.

37. Following a démarche made by the Force Commander to the South Sudanese Minister of Defence and Veterans' Affairs, on 10 March, UNISFA was granted permission by the local SPLA brigade commander to deploy the remaining force protection unit from Kadugli to Gok Machar. The deployment of the remaining troops began on 20 March.

38. Five United Nations Mine Action Service contracted patrol support teams were deployed to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism sector 1 and 2 headquarters in Kadugli and Gok Machar and remained ready to be deployed in support of Mechanism ground patrols. Between 1 November and 24 February, the Service delivered integrated ground patrol training to 40 national monitors, international military observers and elements of the UNISFA force protection unit. In addition, a team participated in a two-day ground patrol exercise conducted at the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism sector headquarters in Gok Machar. The scope of the exercise was limited to practising administrative and logistical aspects of ground patrols within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, but led to useful recommendations on improving operations.

VI. Personnel deployment and mission support

39. During the reporting period, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,533 personnel (237 military observers/staff officers and 4,296 troops), of an authorized strength of 5,326. The strength of the UNISFA police component stood at 17 police officers (14 men and 3 women) from five police-contributing countries, of an authorized strength of 50. The total number of civilian staff stood at 237. The

Government of the Sudan issued 115 visas for UNISFA personnel; 89 visas for military, police and civilian staff remain pending. As at 1 March, the mission had completed the rotation of 2,532 troops through Kadugli airport, conducting 209 rotary-wing round airlifts.

40. In support of the conflict prevention and mitigation strategy, UNISFA concluded the construction of facilities in six dry-season deployment sites, at Noong, Doungop, Alal, Goli, Um Khariet and Agany Toak, and the deployment of troops and military observers to those sites. A permanent company operating base was established in Goli, and the existing temporary operating bases in Marial Achak and Doungap were upgraded to permanent company operating bases. In addition, a platoon-size temporary camp, Mading hon, was constructed close to the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief's residence for his protection. In the reporting period, national monitors, civilian staff and United Nations military observers moved from their temporary accommodation area in the Gok Machar camp to a completed permanent mission compound.

VII. Financial aspects

41. The General Assembly, by its resolution 69/294, appropriated $268.3 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. As at 31 March 2016, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to $65 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $2,435 million. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 January 2016, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2015, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VIII. Observations and recommendations

42. The positive momentum in bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan generated by the conciliatory statements made by their Presidents in January appears to have waned following the decision by the Sudan to reclose the border with South Sudan and its accusations that South Sudan is providing support to Sudanese rebel movements. These developments highlight the need to ensure that the mechanisms established in the 2012 Cooperation Agreement meet regularly to address outstanding issues between the two countries.

43. Tensions between the two countries appear to be on the rise again. With their internal political and conflict resolution processes taking centre stage, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have paid limited attention to their responsibilities regarding Abyei. I call upon both parties to renew efforts to address the issues that have remained unresolved for too long, including the implementation of their Agreement of 20 June 2011. For the consolidation of peace and security in Abyei, it is paramount that the parties revive a viable political process leading to the implementation of the Agreement. In this regard, I urge the parties to reconvene the meetings of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, which has not met since March 2015.

44. I also request the Sudan and South Sudan to ensure the full and permanent withdrawal of all unauthorized forces from the Abyei Area and to work towards creating a security environment conducive to peaceful coexistence and migration. The continued presence of armed Sudanese police personnel in the Diffra oil complex constitutes a violation of the Agreement and various Security Council resolutions. I once again urge the Government of the Sudan to withdraw these personnel and agree upon an alternative security arrangement for the oil installations, and I also urge the Government of South Sudan to prevent the entry of any armed SPLA personnel into the Abyei Area.

45. I commend the efforts of UNISFA in preventing conflict and expanding the Misseriya community's access to resources during the dry season by adopting a flexible and tailored approach to the disengagement line, achieved through close engagement with both communities. This approach has provided the Misseriya with access to grazing land and water available only in the southern region of the Abyei Area at a time of resource scarcity in which there is an increased risk of clashes between the two communities. I am hopeful that the success of this approach will continue throughout the remainder of the dry season.

46. I am greatly encouraged by the initiative displayed by the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities in holding a series of joint meetings in Noong and Todach, and I commend UNISFA for its role in facilitating the discussions. UNISFA will continue to facilitate community-level initiatives that provide a unique opportunity for both communities to discuss issues of mutual concern. The constructive spirit in which the meetings have been held and the progress made on migration routes and the sharing of pasture demonstrates willingness on the part of both communities to continue dialogue in order to work towards a future of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

47. I am also encouraged by the resumption of trading activities between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities in the villages of Noong, Dokura and Tajalei. I am hopeful that further initiatives of this nature will continue the trend of rebuilding confidence and trust between the two communities. The reports of cattle stolen from Misseriya herders being recovered by members of the Dinka community is further indication that a measure of confidence is increasing between the two communities.

48. Following the progress made on the determination of the centre line of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone at the meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism held in Addis Ababa on 14 October, I am disappointed that further meetings of the Mechanism have not been scheduled. I once again urge the two parties to allow the Mechanism to meet in order to provide effective and regular oversight to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. I am hopeful that the permission granted by the Government of South Sudan for UNISFA troops to deploy from the temporary headquarters of the Mechanism in Kadugli to the sector headquarters in Gok Machar indicates a renewed commitment on its part to fully implement the Mechanism. As I have stated in previous reports, both parties need to remove the remaining impediments to the Mechanism's full realization.

49. I renew my call upon the Sudanese authorities to provide increased levels of support to UNISFA. This includes the timely issuance of visas to UNISFA personnel, in particular for the police component, which is unable to deliver on its mandate effectively with its current level of personnel. I also call upon the Government of the Sudan and South Sudan to reach agreement on the establishment

of the Abyei police service, while supporting temporary solutions to address law and order issues in Abyei such as the establishment of community protection committees. In the absence of an Abyei Police Service, such committees constitute an important community-based crime prevention and reduction initiative. I urge the Government of the Sudan to grant the permission necessary to conclude construction work at the Athony airstrip and allow the transportation of construction materials to the Abyei Area to enable UNISFA to refurbish its dilapidated infrastructure and thereby improve the very challenging living conditions of UNISFA personnel. Lastly, I call upon the Government of the Sudan to accept my decision, welcomed by the Security Council in resolution 2205 (2015), to appoint a civilian head of mission to UNISFA.

50. As the Security Council considers the renewal of the mandate of UNISFA, I am encouraged by the progress made by the communities in fostering constructive dialogue on issues affecting their reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. I am also hopeful that the parties will engage in a constructive dialogue with my new Force Commander and Acting Head of Mission, Major General Hassen Ebrahim Mussa, to address the ongoing disputes affecting the Abyei Area. I therefore recommend an extension of the mission's mandate for six months in order to sustain ongoing efforts to facilitate intercommunal dialogue and give my new Force Commander and Acting Head of Mission the opportunity to engage with the parties, the African Union and the Government of Ethiopia on the political situation.

51. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the former Head of Mission, Haile Tilahun Gebremariam, and the former Force Commander, Major General Birhanu Jula Gelalcha, for their service to the United Nations and to the people of Abyei. I also wish to express my gratitude to the recently appointed Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Hassen Ebrahim Mussa, and his staff; my Special Envoy, Haile Menkerios; the former President of South Africa and Chair of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, Thabo Mbeki; the African Union Commission; and the Government of Ethiopia for their continued support and commitment to the search for peace in the Abyei Area.